|  |
| --- |
| Causalities, contributors or change agents? (Re)framing the role of older Australians in climate change   |
| **Maximum 2500 characters (including spaces but excluding title)****Background/Objectives** Population ageing and climate change are two of the most significant global challenges this century. These issues, however, are rarely linked. Older people are typically conceptualised as causalities of, or contributors, to climate change, although emergent research also conceptualises older people as climate change advocates. This presentation, drawing on qualitative research, explores the motivations, experiences, and learnings of older sustainability advocates. **Methods**As part of a broader project evaluating a household sustainability initiative on the Sunshine Coast in regional Australia, four focus groups were conducted with twelve older people. Three males and nine females, with an average age of 61 years (ranging from 50 to 71), engaged in a reflective discussion about their personal motivations, experiences, challenges and successes of living a sustainable life. Data was analysed thematically, through a process of data immersion and interpretation. **Results**These older Australians felt a significant intergenerational ethical and moral responsibility to help ‘fix’ the climate change problem that was partly ‘*our actions, our mess, our responsibility’.* As one explained, while she didn’t feel *personally* responsible for the situation, she was concerned future generations would label her baby boomer generation as the ‘*nightmare generation that left you the mess*’. The data analysis identified three major themes: *leading a sustainable lifestyle in a non-sustainable world; making sacrifices for being a sustainability role model; and how to motivate action on sustainability – fashion, shocks and incentives.***Discussion**Older retirees form a significant part of the volunteer base, dedicating their time, energy, knowledge and resources to a wide range of community-based programs. This research highlights how older people can also be positive ‘agents of change’ for sustainability, with these older Australians deriving significant personal and social meaning from their strong self-identity as an environmental champion. They felt their ‘baby boomer’ generation was responsible for the problem of climate change, and thus needed to be part of the solution. This presentation explores how older people, through local actions and leadership, might help tackle the global challenge of climate change. **Keywords**older people, sustainability, climate change, population ageing, advocacy  |